

U. S. Acts Fast to Aid Freed Cuban Prisoners

CPYRGHT

By Ben F. Meyer
Associated Press

Reports that Premier Fidel Castro was ready to exchange 1113 prisoners for food and medicine put U. S. Government agencies into high gear yesterday to take care of a fresh flood of refugees into Miami.

There was no official confirmation here of Miami and Havana reports that the release of the prisoners, captured in the unsuccessful Bay of Pigs invasion in April, 1961, was about to be worked out between the Castro government and a committee representing families of the prisoners.

[The Miami Herald reported last night it had learned that the release of the prisoners had been secured and that they might be brought to Miami Tuesday, United Press International reported.]

In Havana, the committee chairman, Berta Barreto de los Heros, told newsmen that "all went well, thank God," in the negotiations. She said she could say no more, but gave the impression that only formalities remained.

Word from Havana was that the Cuban government would exchange the prisoners for about \$62 million in food and medicines.

New York attorney James B. Donovan, who has been the principal negotiator for the committee, flew to Miami Sunday and then returned to Havana, presumably to talk again to Castro. It was thought the quick Miami trip may have been to work out final transportation details.

Officials of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare said they were rushing to establish machinery to

handle the health and immigration procedures if the prisoners are released and start moving into Miami by plane. The Miami News reported Pan American Airways had seven planes standing by ready to start the evacuation probably today.

U. S. officials said the negotiations are on a private basis, just as were earlier, unsuccessful efforts to exchange the prisoners for tractors.

Under the current plan, the U. S. public relief agencies and families of the prisoners are expected to provide the Castro regime with much-

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needed food and drug supplies in the exchange.

The handling of the prisoners in Miami would tax existing facilities there in the U. S. Government's 70-million-dollar-a-year program to aid and relocate the Cuban refugees, officials here said. For this reason, HEW was reported tapping other Government agencies for doctors and for personnel to aid in the processing at the Miami International Airport.

One HEW official said, "we are borrowing, begging and otherwise acquiring all facilities we can."

"If and when the prisoners are released and come into Miami," he said, they will be met at the airport, get health and immigration clearance, and receive such help as they might require from the U. S. Government and from local and state agencies, at U. S. expense.

The Miami organization for handling the regular flow of refugees, of 1500 to 2000 a week, is not geared to a sudden influx of 1113 men, many of whom may be ill, an official done, somehow," he added.